**Shared ownership and affordable homes programme 2016 to 2021 and associated affordable homes programmes**

**INVESTMENT PARTNER QUALIFICATION GUIDANCE**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Organisations delivering programmes through the Shared Ownership and Affordable Homes Programme 2016 – 2021 (SOAHP 16-21) must be qualified as Homes England Investment Partners.

This document sets out the arrangements for Investment Partner qualification under the SOAHP 16-21 and, for those organisations not already qualified as Investment Partners, and guidance on how to submit an application for Investment Partner status.

**2. QUALIFICATION – AN OVERVIEW**

As outlined in the SOAHP 16-21 Prospectus, all organisations delivering programmes through the SOAHP 16-21 and associated Affordable Housing programmes (which include Move On Fund, Community Housing Fund Capital and Infrastructure Funding and Care and Support 2) must be a Homes England Investment Partner. Investment Partner status must be achieved before payment under a completed contract can be made.

To become a Homes England Investment Partner, organisations will need to either submit an application for qualification in their own right or join with an existing, qualified Investment Partner. This does not need to be achieved ahead of bidding, but does need to be achieved ahead of the receipt of grant.

Assessment of applications for Investment Partner status verifies the identity of the applicant and includes financial due diligence which considers an applicant’s financial and technical capacity to undertake an agreed programme of new supply and the organisation’s good financial standing.

Applications can be submitted for consideration at any time and turnaround time is approximately 8 weeks from receipt of a fully completed application. Applicants are encouraged to complete their application for Investment Partner status at the same time as submitting bids for the SOAHP 16–21 programme.

Applications not linked with a bid to the SOAHP 16–21 will be considered unsolicited.

Unsolicited applications are not encouraged and prospective partners should have secured an allocation, have submitted or be preparing a bid for the SOAHP 16–21 programme. Unsolicited applications will not be accepted and prospective partners must always contact their local Homes England office in the first instance.

Please note that Homes England Investment Partner status is a separate process to that undertaken by the Social Housing Regulator in its role as the regulator of Registered Providers (RP) of social housing. Details on how to register as a RP are available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/register-and-de-register-as-a-provider-of-social-housing>

**3. THE PROCESS: NEW PARTNERS**

Any provider may submit bids for delivery under the SOAHP 16–21 programme, but will have to achieve Homes England Investment Partner status before payment under an agreed contract can be made.

Organisations not already qualified as Investment Partners with Homes England will need to apply for Investment Partner status by submitting an Application. Organisations are encouraged to complete their Investment Partner Qualification Application form at the same time as submitting their bids. The Investment Partner Qualification Application form is available to download from:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/shared-ownership-and-affordable-homes-programme-2016-to-2021-qualification>

For detailed guidance on completing the application form please see section 5.

Organisations seeking to qualify for Investment Partner status should complete the application form, which consists of 4 sections:

* Section 1; Respondent organisation details
* Section 2; Statement of Good Standing
* Section 3: Financial and Commercial Standing
* Section 4: Managing Development

Homes England seeks to ensure that its assessment processes are proportionate to the scale of funding sought to improve access to funding.

Applications for Investment Partner status may be as a single entity or a consortium of organisations, a Special Purpose Vehicle (“SPV”), (including Local Authority-led Special Purpose Vehicles) or a joint venture company ("JV") constituted as a single entity. A “consortium” means a group of companies or separate legal entities identifiable at the point of application formally acting together for the purpose of bidding for grant under the SOAHP 16–21 programme.

For consortium applications, a lead organisation must be identified and will be expected to be the point of contact for Homes England, to work closely with other consortium members throughout the grant agreement period to deliver the supply envisaged, and be responsible for collating and providing information from consortium members to Homes England on delivery of the various parameters included in the SOAHP 16–21 agreement.

All applications will be acknowledged by receipt and turnaround time is approximately 8 weeks from receipt of a fully completed application.

**4. THE PROCESS: EXISTING INVESTMENT PARTNERS**

Existing Homes England Investment Partners are not required to submit a new qualification application.

Investment Partner performance is reviewed annually through the Continuous Qualification review in order for partners to remain qualified Investment Partners for SOAHP 16–21.

Existing Homes England Investment Partners should notify Homes England of any changes to existing partnerships for the new SOAHP 16–21, for example membership changes to consortia. New members may be identified both at bid stage, and during the programme period.

Partnership changes (e.g. new entrants joining an existing consortium) will be dealt with on a case by case basis and, depending on the nature of the change, may require submission of a new application for qualification.

Existing Homes England Investment Partners wishing to make changes to their partnership should, in the first instance, contact their Homes England Contract Manager.

**5. GUIDANCE ON COMPLETING THE APPLICATION FORM**

*5.1. General*

All applicants completing the Investment Partner Qualification Application Form should answer all questions as accurately and concisely as possible. Where a question is not relevant to the respondent organisation, this should be indicated, with an explanation.

Supporting information should be presented in the same order as, and should be referenced to, the relevant question.

For Section 3, where an applicant has already submitted information to Homes England or the Regulator, this information is not required again. The information will need to have been submitted in precisely the form specified and there should have been no changes since submission. Applicants should specify when they previously submitted information and to whom.

For Section 4, questions 4.5 (development experience), 4.6 (management experience) and 4.7 (risk management) will be scored. A minimum score of 11 points must be achieved for each question and minimum of 33 overall by an applicant in order to receive Investment Partner status.

The response may cover the applicant solely or for Consortium/SPV applications, the information may relate to the relevant participating organisation(s).

If a contractor/managing agent is to be appointed, the response should draw on their experience. If a contractor/developing agent is yet to be appointed and procurement is yet to be completed, further information is to be provided in question 4.4.

All case studies should have been completed successfully (i.e. on time, within budget and without claims or latent defects).

Where certification/accreditation is being actively pursued and strong evidence points to the likelihood of it being gained in the near future, then it may be scored as gained.

Homes England reserves the right to request additional information in relation to an application for Investment Partner status.

By submitting an application for Investment Partner status, Registered Providers will be giving consent that relevant financial information provided to the Regulator may be shared on a confidential basis.

To complete the Investment Partner Qualification Application Form, respondent organisations will require software, which is compatible with Microsoft Word.

Respondent organisations must complete the electronic version of the application form and submit one complete copy of the application form and any supporting documents (including scanned letter(s) of good standing on letter headed paper and signed with a wet signature) by email to:

completed.pqqforms@homesengland.gov.uk

Please ensure that all sections of the application form are completed and returned with your submission by email.

No unauthorised alteration or addition (save for the inclusion of the relevant information) should be made to the form. The completed application form must not be accompanied by any covering letter or any statement that could be construed as rendering the application form equivocal and/or placing it on a different footing from other application forms.

*5.2. Applications from Bodies responding as single entities*

An organisation applying as a single entity must complete all of the sections (excluding Section 1.2) fully and provide all the necessary supplementary information requested.

*5.3. Consortium Applications*

Any response on behalf of a consortium must be co-ordinated by a designated Consortium Leader.

In the case of consortium applications, “respondent organisation” means the Consortium Leader of a consortium application.

The Consortium Leader is responsible for:

* ensuring that the information supplied in the application form is accurate, to the best of its knowledge;
* completing all Sections of the application form;
* providing all the necessary supplementary information from participating organisations (where applicable) so as to enable Homes England to assess the overall proposal for the delivery of the proposed programme(s).
* Please note that different questions require information from individual participating organisations, from all participating organisations or from the Consortium Leader only – this has been indicated, where relevant.
* It should also be noted that the statement of good standing requested in Section 2 is required from ALL consortium members.

*5.4. SPV and JV Applications*

Any response on behalf of an SPV or JV must be co-ordinated by the principal SPV/JV shareholder or member (actual or designated).

In the case of SPV and JV applications, “respondent organisation” means the principal shareholder or the member who will take a lead in negotiations with Homes England on behalf of the SPV or JV.

The principal SPV/JV shareholder or member is responsible for:

* ensuring that the information supplied in the application form is accurate, to the best of its knowledge;
* completing all Sections of the application form;
* providing all the necessary supplementary information from participating organisations (where applicable) so as to enable Homes England to assess the overall proposal for the delivery of the proposed programme(s).
* Please note that different questions require information from individual participating organisations, from all participating organisations or from the respondent organisation only – this has been indicated, where relevant.

It should also be noted that the statement of good standing requested in Section 2 is required from ALL members of an SPV or JV.

*5.5. Re-Evaluation*

In the event that there is:

1. a change in the membership of a Consortium or SPV/JV from the date of submission of this application form to the award of any agreement between the Consortium/SPV/JV and Homes England; and/or
2. a change in information supplied by a respondent organisation or any of the participating organisations at Sections 1 to 4 of the application form Homes England reserves the right to re-evaluate the application of the Consortium/SPV/JV on the basis of the new member/ shareholder or the new information and act in accordance with the results of such re-evaluation.

*5.6. Undertaking*

All respondent organisations should note that any false information included in any of the responses will result in exclusion from the subsequent stages of the SOAHP 2016 – 2021.

The Agency has a bribery and corruption policy in place and, therein a zero tolerance approach. The web page with a summary description of all current Homes England ethical policies (including the anti-bribery and corruption policy) is as follows:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ethical-policies>

All respondent organisations shall ensure that they do not and, where appropriate, all other participating organisations in the Consortium/SPV/JV do not:

* give or offer any gift or consideration whatsoever as an inducement or reward to any servant of a public body. Any such action will entitle Homes England to cancel any agreements concluded with the respondent organisation and will result in exclusion from the SOAHP 2016 – 2021 and, at Homes England’s discretion, any of its future funding programmes;
* communicate to any organisation other than Homes England or its own advisers (from whom they shall have secured all necessary guarantees of confidentiality beforehand) the details contained within this application form or within any subsequent submissions to Homes England in connection with the detailed bidding process for the SOAHP 2016 – 2021;
* enter into any arrangement or agreement with any other person the purpose or effect of which is that any party thereto shall:
	+ refrain from submitting this application form or any documents relating to the detailed bidding process;
	+ or shall limit, restrict, vary or adjust the content of this application form or any other document by reference to any other applicant or any other party's application or bid, nor
* directly canvass any member or official of Homes England concerning the acceptance of this application form or any other document nor obtain nor attempt to obtain any information from any such member or official concerning any other application, bid or submission made by any other party.

*5.7. Freedom of Information Act (2000)*

Homes England is a public authority under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR).

As part of its duties under the FOIA/EIR, Homes England may disclose information to a person making a request unless the information is covered by an exemption under FOIA/EIR.

Homes England is required to determine whether the public interest in maintaining the exemption from disclosing it outweighs the public interest in disclosing it.

*6. Communications*

If you have a query regarding your Investment Partner Qualification Application form please email the completed.pqqforms@homesengland.gov.uk mailbox.

If Homes England considers any question or request for clarification to be of material significance, both the query and response will be included in the guidance.